Interview with [P15]

P = Participant at case study institution

The following conventions are used in transcription of spoken interviews:

[replacement information in square brackets]

[redacted information in grey in square brackets]

[?] = unintelligible missing word(s); immediately following word = unclear[?]

[#] = redacted numerical information

CAPITALS to signify emphasis in speaking

((Extraneous information in double brackets))

Researcher

Brilliant. OK. So yeah, the reason why you got in touch was you're a [role]. So we were interested in interviewing [role] and [role] from, you know, different subject areas as well, so we can get different perspectives on this. So, not only, say, the [discipline], but also DIFFERENT types of subject areas.

So, just to kind of warm up a bit, perhaps you could just tell me very BRIEFLY a little bit about your ROLE as [role] at the [unit]. Looks like a huge big AREA. ((laughing)). So what is it THAT involves? So you have a [role] and a [role] and, so what are you in CHARGE of?

[P15]

[Redacted identifying information]

Researcher

Okay great. So as you READ in the in the outline of our project, we're basically looking at how it is that English is becoming increasingly used at universities in Europe. So, for example, we started in the Netherlands because they were quite EARLY implementers of English language programs. I'm looking at Austria and we have a few other people looking at OTHER places.

So, I was wondering, you know, have you [redacted identifying information] any implementation of academic programs that are taught IN English IN your faculty? And and if so, whether there were any kind of CHALLENGES or RESISTANCE that you encountered or WITNESSED in relation to English language programs?

[P15]

Yeah, we have ESTABLISHED an English language master course. I'm, I'm, I'm just talking about master courses now. There is also a the, the, the, the PHD programs, which are in English and the PHD programs are are, sort of ALSO the responsibility of the [role], so the PhD programs are something in between. So, [redacted identifying information], so I'll talk about the bachelor and master programs, yeah. ALL of our bachelor programs are in German and PROBABLY they're gonna stay that way. Why? Okay, different reasons here. I think, I think we want to we we don't want to erect big HURDLES to our LOCAL German speaking students coming straight from SCHOOL, and I think this would sort of turn them, I think it wouldn't be nice for them. I mean they grew up in a largely German speaking environment. So, I think there is a pretty BROAD agreement that the UNDERGRAD courses are going to stay that way. In the GRADUATE courses there is STRONG pressure, but also a strong WILLINGNESS to to change to English language programs, with one BIG exception, which is in our [unit], the TEACHER education program. Umm in OUR faculty something like [#]% of the students are in the TEACHER education program in [subject area]. And so that's a BIG chunk of students and I think they HAVE to, I mean, they HAVE to be taught in German. It's a that's a that's a pretty FORMAL thing. They want to be teachers in a in a German language SCHOOL. So they have a right, I think they're they're ENTITLED to a German speaking teaching and also it makes sense because this is the people who are arguably going to become teachers in Austria should be fluent in German or OTHERWISE it like, simply makes no sense.

So, but ALL the other programs, ALL the other programs are are under PRESSURE to to become English speaking English language and all the other graduate programs, and ONE of them already is. That's the FORMER course that we call [program name]. Now it's called [program name]. So we used this, well, let's put it differently. We USED the CHANGE in the curriculum to implement it as an ENGLISH language program. Why, because we we need MORE students in this program we need BETTER in the sense of we need students who make a DELIBERATE move to [city].

[City]'s a [redacted identifying information] and many of our students [?] just did their programs here because they don't have to LEAVE their the environment, the city where they grew UP, and that's not the BEST motivation. So if people GO someplace for a graduate course, of course this is a strong SIGN that they that they that they're serious about this.

There WAS, and there IS some RESISTANCE, especially by SOME personnel in OLD con-, let’s call it OLD contracts. There has been a consistent CHANGE in in the the personnel of the yeah, the SCIENTISTS at the [case study university]. In 2003 or 2006, I believe the, the, the, the, the LEGAL situation was opened UP, so since then ALL the professors when when we when we are hiring a professor, it has become a very COMPETITIVE process, by DEFINITION international, by definition, I would say in most cases, at least in our [unit] proficiency in German is not REQUIRED. So SOME of our professors don't even speak German, although they SHOULD at some point, but we are not really ENFORCING this. And but SOME people in the OLD contracts have not have a, have not had a a very pronounced EXPOSURE to to the English language. I would say the professors on the relatively new contracts ALL have. And so THIS would require redoing. It's a LOT of work. I mean all the slides ((laughing)). Some people don't know, I mean, for ME, I mean for people of MY generation, that comes naturally, but there is some people on OLD contracts for them it's a little HARDER, simply to change the teaching LANGUAGE just like that. That’s how I would call it.

BUT there is a pretty large AGREEMENT that this is the way to GO, and what I'm experiencing is that some PERSONNEL, people who don't feel too comfortable in the English language programs, that THEY do the UNDERGRADUATE teaching. That’s it.

Researcher

Are they HAPPY with that?

[P15]

((Exhales)) Well, happy ((exhales)). PERSONALLY, I think that's great. Personally, I think this is what we have to do, and I'm EXCITED about that. And I WANT other, I want DIFFERENT students. We have, we are in the FIRST year of our [subject area] master.

It was MOSTLY still students from our OWN programs, so I think we need to ADVERTISE better and our course needs to get KNOWN a little better internationally. But I think it’s GREAT. I think this is what we need to do because that's the only way to get, I mean, I think we need DIFFERENT students. That's it. We need students who make a DELIBERATE decision to do THIS program in [city] and MOVE here, because then you get VERY, very different students. I think that's that's AND ALSO your teaching can be done differently. So I'M happy with that, yes. And currently the NON-English speaking programs like in [subject area] and in [subject area], it's, it's kind of kind of BILINGUAL anyway. The SLIDES are in English. A lot of teaching is ALLOWED to be done in English, even if the program is FORMALLY German language. Most students don't MIND. If they WOULD mind, they had a RIGHT to the German language. So some of these courses are done kind of BILINGUALLY. But I think the NEXT CHANGE in the curricula WILL be a change to English language programs in ALL curricula. We have one one program which is called [program name] and the [program name][?]. THERE is some resistance because they argue that a lot of the laws that we are discussing in [program name] are AUSTRIAN laws which only have their like proper, their proper set up in the German language, so there's some discussion there, but in ALL other other programs in the GRAD sector, we’re going with the English language.

Researcher

Can I just check, when you mentioned the staff that DIDN'T want to teach in English and you said OLD contracts, are these full-time staff on permanent contracts or are these term part-time staff. Full time staff?

[P15]

Yeah.

Researcher

Yeah. So you just mean that they're an older generation?

[P15]

Yeah. I mean it is really that way that the ((exhales)), if you look at the NATIONALITY of the personnel, the OLD contracts, these were AUSTRIANS, like exclusively ((laughing)). In the NEW contracts, the professors, maybe [#]% Austrian, a LOT of Germans – since it’s the same language of course – but ALSO a lot of people who are NEITHER from Austria or Germany or Switzerland, of course, but from other countries, ALSO from the UK. So we are, I THINK that’s good.

Researcher

And is there a LEGAL basis for this distinction between OLD and NEW contract, or is it the same type of contract?

[P15]

No VERY different, very different. There is a SPECIAL status that’s called in the German language ‘Beamter’, so it’s a kind of EXTREMELY safe ((laughing)) kind of position where you FORMALLY cannot be thrown out. No WAY, unless you commit a crime. And ALSO the people in these OLD contracts get very good pensions. And the people in the NEW contracts CAN be kicked out. So I could be kicked out if I, I don't know what I would need to do to be kicked out. Probably I I'm, I'm not, I'm not gonna risk it ((laughing)). But if I if I wouldn't [?] so I wouldn't submit RESEARCH proposal for a while, this COULD become a problem.

Researcher

Right, right.

[P15]

But in the OLD contracts, even THIS would not be a problem. So on the on the GOOD side, we are pretty, we are much FREER to to negotiate a salary than in the old contracts, so I think it's simply becoming more liberal, right? So we MAY negotiate for more money, pensions tendency are LOWER, and it's not 100% job security anymore, it's just 99%.

So, this is basically the DISTINCTION here. ALSO also in the old contracts, there is PAY for, extra money, for EXAMS that you take. That's interesting. Extra money, for exams, for the NUMBER of exams that you take. So there's a STRONG financial, well, it's GOOD for you if you do MANY exams.

Researcher

What kind of exams?

[P15]

Well the EXAMS, the NUMBER of students that you do exams with.

Researcher

That you examine, OK.

[P15]

If you if you like, if you do 100 exams, if you if you if you examine 100 of students 100 students, you got MORE money than if you just do 50 students, yeah. In MY contract, that doesn't matter ((laughing)). In MY contract, it's a it's about the, no it's not that anymore, by VERY recently very recently, only this year, we MAY not get money on our OWN personal account anymore if we get GOOD projects, but it USED to be like that, not TOO much, but up to 3% um overhead[?]. So the tendency is that in the NEW contract you may get or may have gotten money for big projects personally, on TOP of your salary. So THAT’S the big distinction I guess.

Researcher

So the old con- contracts when you said ‘Beamter’ that would have been before 2002, then they started before the before the Universities Act 2002 presumably?

[P15]

Yes, yes.

So. OK.

Researcher

Um so so you mentioned that you mentioned that there's PRESSURE to change to English language for your postgraduate master’s degrees and that's the TREND you see happening you you think that's what's gonna HAPPEN for the future. So what kind of pressure do you experience?

[P15]

I'm not sure, I mean, let's put it THIS way. The RECTORATE is happy about it ((smiles)). So it's not the kind of pressure that if we don't DO it, we they're gonna cut money or something like that. It's not that kind of pressure. It's simply that the rectorate ENCOURAGES it and LIKES the idea. And but there is a PRETTY large agreement in [unit] now that this is a good IDEA. Almost ALL professors [?] say let’s say ALL professors would AGREE that this is a good idea. The MAIN reason is in most in most programs we we could USE a little more students.

You know, I mean this is not in [subject area]? Yeah, EVEN in [subject area], we could, I mean. We DO have a large teaching overload in [subject area], but most of this is the teachers education program. And yeah, so we're HAPPY about most students. We're happy about BETTER students, because ALL of us we are experiencing or HAVE been experiencing a high number of dropouts. So people, they take a course and then they they're gone. This used to be VERY, very bad. ONE reason is that studying the AUSTIRA is for free. And you simply get a lot of other perks if you're in INSCRIBED, like for public transport or some insurance issues, and this is so, MANY people actually are inscribed, but they don't really study, and this makes teaching planning very hard. Also, there is a LEGAL right in Austria to enroll in ANY program. And there EVEN is the possibility to be in[?] inscribed in several programs in parallel. I PERSONALLY think that's ridiculous, but that's the law. And so, actually we, we have sometimes a BIG difference between the NUMBER of students that are inscribed and the students that actually take courses and then the students who actually FINISH a program. And it used to be when I started as [unit role] that in [subject area] the Bachelor program, we had a loss of 80% of students. 80. Imagine how much POTENTIAL you're losing here and imagine what a waste of TEACHING that is ((laughing)). We are TEACHING and four or five students are not gonna, are not gonna finish. This has become much better, as the the LEGAL situation has in our in my sense IMPROVED a little in the sense of the student representatives it has WORSENED ((laughing)). So NOW they have to do more COURSES, and now they may they may be CHARGED more for studying, but it's we are we are very far from the UK situation of course, I mean where it's we're talking about thousands of pounds right and it's relatively little money here in Austria so.

Researcher

Sorry, £1000 is if they don't complete on TIME or what is the-

[P15]

Sorry the fee the, I don't know by heart how high it is. It's in the HUNDREDS. It's in the HUNDREDS. It is AFTER a a certain number of semesters, they they make you pay? Yeah. After when you have reached a certain AGE, I think it's 27, you need to take care of your HEALTH insurance, which is up to THAT point a part of studying.

Um and NOW you need to have a have, you need to PROVE that you have made a certain number of ECTS every semester. So now you have to PROVE that you are actually studying. ALL of this, of course, has been met by RESISTANCE from the students associations, but it's STILL being done. And so this has become BETTER. But when you have a student who deliberately comes to [city], we believe that the LIKELIHOOD that the student is serious about it it's MUCH higher.

Researcher

Yeah. And THESE new changes that you you were talking about have been relatively RECENT, have they, in RECENT years that these changes have happened?

[P15]

Yes

Researcher

Yeah. OK. So you mentioned the TARGET agreements, I think? I mean, you mentioned that you're never kind of PENALIZED if you're not using, you know, deciding to have English courses. Is there any INCENTIVE or any kind of REWARD for it?

[P15]

No, no, no, no reward. Would be NICE. I mean the the it's a CHALLENGE. I mean the issue is usually is when you when when your curriculum is running out, an old curriculum is running out, you STILL have to offer it for four more years, which MEANS that we NOW have new courses in English, and make an offer for the old students to get these courses accepted as courses that FULLY don't exist anymore. Because we cannot offer a full program of courses in the OLD and in the NEW curriculum, this is simply IMPOSSIBLE from the PERSONNEL that we have, what we HAVE been asking the Rectorate and have been COMPLAINING heavily about having to run two curricula SIMULTANEOUSLY for several years, but this is simply not FEASIBLE. But what we're doing now, we're just kind of accepting courses with a different cont-, SOMEWHAT different content and somewhat different name for the students. FORTUNATELY, it’s very it's very FEW students who are still in the OLD curricula and need to have a chance to finish studying the old curriculum.

Researcher

So what is an OLD curriculum is that there's a there's a SET number of years that curriculum runs for, or what does that mean, the old curriculum.

[P15]

When an old curriculum is is FINISHED, when we say, THIS curriculum is not offered anymore.

Researcher

And you decide just, you mean ANYTIME you just decide to stop doing it.

[P15]

We decide, we may decide that we are when we establishing a new curriculum, for example, like [program name], which became EFFECTIVE in the winter term [year], the OLD [subject area] curriculum was not OFFERED anymore in this winter term. But of course we had students who had inscribed themselves in the old [subject area] curriculum, and we need to give them a chance to FINISH. And by LAW, it's four years. We NEED to give them four years to finish. But of course, when we establish new courses in the new curriculum we cannot just on TOP of that offer ALL the courses for the old curriculum as WELL. I mean you would need double double the PERSONNEL for that. But nobody's giving us any any personnel for for these transition times. So we have to find a WAY to uh [?] to work out this transition.

Researcher

So HOW do you DO it?

[P15]

And it’s work. I mean what we DON'T wanna do is simply RENAME old courses with the SAME content. So a new curriculum is also work, and depending on how comfortable you are English language may be much MORE work. Fortunately, I would say MOST of us are pretty comfortable in the English language now, and when you PUBLISH and when you do RESEARCH in the English language for ME it's easier to use the English language terms than the German ones because MANY of these modern terms in the sciences are in the English language, anyway. And there are a couple of expressions that translating them into German is not possible [?], so it comes NATURALLY anyway.

Researcher  
And yet for the BACHELOR’S courses you use German, so it is POSSIBLE to do it, but is it just because there is more research based at master’s level that it's easier to do it in English?

[P15]

Yes, yes, the number of STUDENTS is lower in the in the in the graduate courses, we have MORE graduate programs and we have undergraduate programs. So the idea is that on the GRADUATE level there is a diversification according to the interest. We know that we are LOSING some students on the graduate program. We KNOW that some people who did the undergraduate[?] course don't continue. So they go to work, which is fine. But SO far we have LOST students, and ALSO very good ones. That's another another problem, we have been losing some of our BEST students. So we also want to be able to keep them with our more, WE believe more attractive English language program, and also the [subject area] for example. We simply NEED to offer the German language undergrad teaching because there we have the TEACHER’S program students. And they NEED an English language program.

But also we believe that we would lose a lot of undergrads by offering the undergrad courses in English, although it would be not an INTERESTING experiment ((laughing)). I don't know. Yeah.

Researcher

So with the bilingual programs you mentioned, even if you say that is advertised in German, but it's a bilingual program THAT gives people the option to, so for example, if I were taking this master’s program, I could do everything in German by choice, I could make my way through it, WITHOUT having to take an English course on the program? Is that possible?

[P15]

In the GERMAN language programs? Or do you mean the NEW?

Researcher

In the bilingual ones. I'm just wondering what bilingual means.

[P15]

Yeah, I mean bilingual, OK, what DOES that mean? So what we what we [?], I mean this is VERY individual. For example, we in the OLD programs in the OLD German language programs, sometimes we had a students exchange students who were not proficient in German. The interesting issue is how they get into these exchange programs if they're NOT proficient with German because they had to make a tick somewhere that they speak German. But there seems to have been a way ((laughing)) to get into this exchange programs without REALLY speaking German. So we made English language slides, for example. Like have slides in lectures in English, but still talk German. Or ask ask the STUDENTS whether they mind if we do this in English now and you, usually your students wouldn't wouldn't mind.

So let's call it making individual adaptations to the SPECIFIC situation. Sometimes in exercises or in [type] courses even do this in BOTH languages, say something in German AND in English, it's possible.

It's kind of GOOD, I mean. Anyway, I mean, even in a German language program, it's it's good if the students learn about what they're doing now or what this instrument or what the method is called in English. So this is what we have been doing for a while. But of course it's not perfect. And it simply became also with the student exchanges we received a not sufficient an INSUFFICIENT number of incoming students, as a German language program was simply a NOT attractive. So that's ANOTHER reason it's much easier much easier if if you have an English language program to to get a NICE exchange students and get the exchange programs going.

Researcher

So with with the with the German language program you were talking about, that was, would that be classed as bilingual on the course kind of catalogue or?

[P15]

On the on the curriculum? There's there's a like on the on the TOP formal[?] level, it's German. Then then there is another level where we where we not advertise but where we register the courses on the WEBSITE, and then on THIS website, we have the OPTION to say that it's in BOTH languages, and we ticked this option BOTH languages on the course selection level. And this was important because the this is what the students see. Students don't see the the the the curriculum files. Like the big curriculum. This is something very formal. But what the students do see is the tick boxes, the web. And there they were able to see that this program is available in BOTH languages. But AGAIN, this is what we are going away from now.

Researcher

Right, because you're heading towards English.

[P15]

Right right.

Researcher

And so if I were a student and I saw this is in BOTH languages on the website, I would assume I need to KNOW both languages to complete this course, or or would it be possible for me just to know say German?

[P15]

I mean the idea is that, I mean the MAIN idea was really the exchange students. We we we simply were under PRESSURE and WANTED also to to make an offer to international students who don't speak German. And this was easy to IMPLEMENT. So we could DO it just like that. And having a new curriculum is not easy to IMPLEMENT. You need to you have an agreement that you really want this. This is extra work for everybody involved. So that's not QUICK.

Researcher

Yeah, no the only reason I ASK is because when I've spoken to other people, they've also said bilingual, but they've said it's possible for students to make their way through the program with ONE of the languages, say ONLY with English or ONLY with German. So is that possible also?

[P15]

EITHER language would do.

Researcher

Would be okay. Okay, great.

[P15] But of course, I mean, NOBODY can study a graduate course or even undergraduate course without ANY English proficiency, because in ANY program we require the students to read English language LITERATURE. I mean there is NO bachelor thesis in our faculty that, or maybe there ARE, but I wouldn't know of ((laughs)) that DON'T require English language reading. I mean of course there are simply MANY publications not OFFERRED in German. And if you want to know the state-of-the-art in ANY subject, you need to be able to read English. So of course.

Researcher

And and for for DOCTORAL level, you're part of the doctoral SCHOOLS as well. Is everything, yeah.

[P15]

Yes. That's in English EXCLUSIVELY.

Researcher

That's all in English.

[P15]

We ONLY implemented these doctoral schools [#] years ago. That was also a big international INTERNATIONALIZATION move.

On a personal note, I think, the UK has been profiting a lot from their English language programs and some of the BEST international students have always been going to the UK, and with Brexit we are hoping to get some of these now to to Europe, yeah, so ((laughing)).

Researcher

Yeah. Seen as an opportunity.

[P15]

Yeah. I mean the the English LANGUAGE world has profited a lot from the influx of very BRIGHT students from all over the world. And so I think it's a GOOD idea to also offer English language, programs for European countries. I find it astonishing that the English language world has been so attractive despite the fees. I mean, of course there's like this system in the UK and in the United States where there are simply a couple of universities, universities which are simply on the top of these rankings, I think that has to do something with it. Like in Austria, which is like per LAW like HAS to be more like bottom UP, I mean, there's a law that, of course there's a reason for that law. The reason for that law is that this Social Democratic impulse of getting as many people into university as possible and is putting some strain on the RESEARCH, of course, since when you have so many students and some of them not not truly motivated, the balance between teaching research is probably different than I guess in [UK university] or [US university], I guess.

Researcher

Is it are you referring to the ‘freier Hochschulzugang’?

[P15]

Yes.

Researcher

Yeah, that is, that's that came into the law. Do you know what the legal STATUS is or the legal background for that, ‘freier Hochschulzugang’?

[P15]

Well, there are I mean, programs with an EXCESSIVE student overload that apply, may apply for an exception for this ‘freier Hochschulzugang’, which means they may try to get a sort of an ENTRY exam. For example, of course, the medical studies have that, psychology has that, I think chemistry has it. And and then there is a limit of HOW many students you may receive. So it's not for ALL disciplines the ‘freier Hochschulzugang’, but it's for ALMOST all of them. And the HURDLE for getting this exam is high. Yeah. And personally, I think any exam is gonna be not perfect. And for sure, CHARGING students thousands of Euros is not perfect, but because that doesn't take care that you got the best students. In Germany, there is a system of the mark in your high, your high school exam which is also not perfect. Although ALL of these restrictions are not perfect, I think a system which results in 80% drop out rates in the undergrads programs, I would say is even more imperfect ((laughing)). So this is, yeah.

Researcher

[Redacted identifying information]

Would you say that's also a reason, I KNOW you mentioned that you had low student numbers at master’s level, you wanted to increase them, but would you say being able to restrict student numbers for English language courses is also RELEVANT or not so much?

[P15]

Say that again.

Researcher

Um because IF you've got an English language program, you're allowed to restrict the student numbers according to the Universities Act 2002, but your problem MORE has been the case of getting more students for master’s programs. Is that right?

[P15]

In this new, I mean the only subject this APPLIES to is this [subject area], um the other graduate programs are pretty FAR in our faculty from exceeding from EXCEEDING that number, [subject area] or [subject area] or [subject area]. I mean, SOME of these programs are in the single digits in the students they have per year, yeah so. Um in this new [subject area] curriculum, we have something like [#][?], which is, I would say, the upper limit of what's REASONABLE for a graduate program.

And I don't, I don't THINK that we are, I don't think that we're allowed to RESTRICT the number of students EVEN in the graduate programs. BUT if we had a very high number of students in the graduate programs, we WOULD be allowed to set up a new graduate program. I know that because I have tried to, and the main reason for not getting it was the LOW number of students. So I think if you have a HIGH number of students, there's that's a sufficient justification for for setting up ANOTHER master program, so FORTUNATELY we did not have this overload in the graduate sector. This would be a disaster, because then you can’t afford it. You need to teach very differently in the graduate courses.

Researcher

I mean in the in the LAW, in the Universities Act 2002 if you've got a a postgraduate course in English that allows you to restrict the student numbers in ANY foreign language, but it TENDS to be English, obviously, unless there's some reason for the subject area to be in another foreign language. So but because I guess your because your subject area is more a case of there being FEWER students at master’s level, you're trying to encourage more through to come through the English language.

[P15]

Yes, again, I don't know what we would DO if it were the other way around. My personal opinion would would be to maybe establish interdisciplinary courses. For example, we are running an [subject area] uh, by the WAY, [subject area] has been going on for for a decade, or so in our [unit], and that has ALWAYS been always been English language. I should mention that one. I’ve also been teaching in that one all the time, and that's a good problem.

And that's INTERDISCIPLINARY. So it's also being set by the [subject area] faculty, for example, and by the [subject area] faculty. And when you do an INTERNATIONAL program, you can you MAY restrict the number of students. So that's quite nice. So that's possible. But the REASON why this is so is because such a program is BETWEEN the study programs, and the study programs in our university are the units that are allocated money for their teaching. So depending on how many STUDENTS we have, we receive money for the teaching. And another change that has happened recently is now it's not the number of students, but now it's the number of FINISHING students. So this also increased the pressure for us to actually get the students to FINISH.

Researcher

Is this through the TARGET agreement that that's determined or.

[P15]

Yes, yes, yes but that's al- that's al- that's also an agreement between the MINISTRY and the universities. So the universities will NOT receive as MUCH money from the ministries if they if the NUMBER of students, number of students is important, but also the number of GRADUATIONS.

Researcher

Are you talking about the new funding formula? Because I thought that was based on ACTIVE students, so it was, which means you have to be doing a certain number of credits per year to count as an active student.

[P15]

Yes, that’s right.

Researcher

And and then then it's a per capita, kind of roughly 1/3 allocation. Is is THAT what you're referring to?

[P15]

THAT'S what I'm referring to.

Researcher

Right.

[P15]

Probably, YOU know the LEGAL situation better than I do.

Researcher ((laughing)) It's it's just that no, I've just been talking to, you know, several different people about it. I've been doing a bit of interviewing also with the ministry, so, but yeah.

Do you think, I mean YOU teach at doctoral level as well as master's level, is that right? You teach doctoral students as well as master's students YOURSELF?

[P15]

Whether I TEACH or what do you mean?

Researcher

Like you teach PhD students as well as-

[P15] Yes, yes.

Researcher

So do you think the the DRIVERS of English language are DIFFERENT between master's and doctoral level?

[P15]

Well, the PhD courses have been very international from since I came, I came to [case study university] like [#] years ago. THIS has always been international. Of course, MOST of the students have been, but also also it depends on where you are, like in [subject area], it used to be a little more GERMAN language oriented, probably because the RESEARCH is also like that because when you when you talk to people in Austria you better speak German, [redacted identifying information], and so THAT makes sense, but THAT has changed with the new professors, NOW most of our PhD students are INTERNATIONAL, and LANGUAGE is not an issue anymore in research. And in MANY departments, the working language is English. In MY department it has become English in the last [#] years. But only in the last [#] years, since when I came, we didn't have too many external like 3rd money personnel. But now we have a LOT of them and they're kind of per definition international, and many of them DON'T even speak German. So THAT has been a difference right from the start.

Researcher

And if you had a PhD student who was like, like you say, doing [subject area] and basing the study on Austrian society, would they still be doing it in English?

[P15]

No. That's IMPOSSIBLE. I'm NOT a [subject area specialist], but I wouldn't, I would, but I wouldn't, I wouldn't hire a a person who doesn't speak German for such work[?], I mean we we hired a post doc recently in one of OUR projects where we do kind of SOME interviews and some stakeholder integration, and this student doesn't speak, she's a post doc, she doesn't speak German. So this will BE a challenge. And we are thinking about how we, how we can take care of that. Um, but I think any RESPONSIBLE PI in the social sciences would for a program that we requires a lot of interviews not hire somebody who doesn't speak German. It simply doesn't WORK.

Researcher

Sure. And supposing like you had a an Austrian or German or somebody from the DACH Länder who was doing these, this this kind of research, would they STILL write their thesis in English because of publications? Or would they, I mean, for example, would they interview in German and do the research, the [type] work, but would they still write the thesis in English, or is it still possible that you'd have German done for that?

[P15]

We have two new we have, both of our [subject area specialists] that we have hired in the last [#] or so years are VERY international and ALL of the publications are in English. And but also BOTH of them don't have their explicit research FOCUS in Austria. One has more like [country] and the global south and the other one, for her, I mean, she could do her research and she could and she does her research ANYWHERE. So it's not the kind of research that is strongly based in Austria. So for them it's, it's not an issue. And then there was a THIRD one. He's always on short contracts because the position has not been filled or on tenure so far. But he also also publishes in English.

So maybe the TEACHER'S program is different. In the TEACHER program the per definition, I mean there is a German language PUBLICATION in the teacher's program. It HAS to be German language because it's read by teachers, and its MARKET is teachers. And the whole point of the, of the teacher, of the RESEARCH for the teacher's program is making an offer for the local TEACHERS. So, there, I think we'd say there is no WAY to do it differently. Although the professor there also tries also PUBLISHES in English, but she also ALWAYS needs to publish in German as well.

In any APPLICATION of the research, of course, German is an issue. For example, my research is pretty applied in Austria, so I do BOTH as well.

Researcher

Do you not worry, is it not a concern to you, for example, that there might be a LOSS of expertise in LOCALLY grounded subject areas, so, for example, [subject area] that you just mentioned.

[P15]

Well yes, I mean one problem is with the EXCURSIONS for example. NOBODY of the newly hired professors, know Austria very well. We're not from- one is from Austria, one is from Austria so she may know Austria very well, [redacted identifying information] but like doing EXCURSIONS in Austria, for example, for us is more challenging than for people who have grown UP here. So I think that's a REAL issue. That's a REAL issue.

Researcher

[Redacted identifying information]

[P15]

[Redacted identifying information] but of course you need to know a region much BETTER if you wanna do a good excursion, alright. Yeah, that's a challenge. And especially where young[?] [subject area specialists] [?], This is why there has been resistance and the regional regional regional research program, which is a kind of [subject area] because this is I mean per definition in CLOSE interaction with administration with ORGANIZATIONS that NO way will have English as their normal language, I mean they may, they may SPEAK English, but it's not the the COMMON way of communicating. Yeah.

Researcher

And the the the National Development plan for Austria by the MINISTRY, it includes a section on SOCIETY, like responsibility to SOCIETY. Do you think that helps to COUNTERACT this in anyway or no, you've not become aware of it or?

[P15]

It's a real CHALLENGE. I mean, I do [subject area] and I do like [research area]. You have very nice [research area] in the UK. And in Austria we also have nice [research area]. In the UK it’s a big issue and I wanna get this on the TABLE in Austria so we have done a [?] like a [research area] and a [?] strategy in Austria now. So I'm in CLOSE contact with the ministries, end up spending a LOT of time on these APPLIED German language I don't know what you call it, extension or third, we call it third mission ((laughing)) getting getting this into a into a, like communicated to the public, and also getting getting POLITICS to do something about it, because for me the fact that is this is like an [subject area] issue. And so I spend QUITE a lot of time on that, and if I spent my time JUST on writing papers that would be better for my from my RECORD, but I think that there's also a responsibility to to TRANSFORM what you're doing to local, to national, to to national SOCIETY. So I think many of us, many of us are perceiving this as a as a CHALLENGE.

This is, OBVIOUSLY this is differently in like in [subject area], right, where there is no REGIONAL context. You could, you could do [subject area] anywhere. But [?] in the [discipline] or in some [subject areas], this is uh different, where there is a like the CALL for a regional engagement.

Researcher

Do you think you might be disadvantaged also in terms of FUNDING for research if you're more locally based on using German, German language and the German language for your research? Are there LESS possibilities for getting funding? For example for research?

[P15]

No, I mean, there's also ministry funding. It's often the OTHER way. If you if you are, if you're really ENGAGED with the ministries and with these, then you have a better, a better shot at some of these. I mean the the the problem is this NATIONAL funding, these ministry funding, they don't CARE too much about papers, and the whole PROJECTS are not set up like that. But of course if you do it smartly, you will still get papers out of that. So I would say it's a little HARDER for the competitive international programs because we only have a a GIVEN amount of time available. And if you COVER some of this time away for other purposes, then you are disadvantaged, but of course in terms of receiving research grants, you may get different kind of grants as well, right?

Researcher

Are they as PRESTIGIOUS in the university as the big say, ECR grants or something?

[P15]

No, no no no ((laughing))

The [governance body] VERY much asks for ECR grants, the [governance body] the, the [role in governance body] recently told us that ONE paper from the [disciplinary name] publishing group is for HIM like 10 times as important as any other paper. So it's not just Q1 anymore, so now it's just EXTREMELY visible publications.

Researcher  
It doesn't bother, it doesn't bother YOU that there's less prestige.

[P15]

Well yes of course. Of COURSE it bothers me, but I made the decision. I mean, what's also nice, I’ll show you something ((shows book)). Austrian [?]strategy. This was a lot of work. This does not COUNT on any impact factor, right? It does not appear anywhere, but it's a BOOK.

Yeah, I mean I when I came to [city] I set up my contract in a way that I don't have the use PERIODIC evaluations anymore. I'm LOSING money by NOT having PERIODIC evaluations, but I'm I told my rector, [?] you know, when they hired me, I was pretty old. I was [age] or something. I was, I don't know, whatever, yeah, [age] because I had been professor in [country] for [#] years before. And I told the [role in governance body], listen I'm gonna do my WORK. And I do. But they’ve given me some liberties, and I appreciate these liberties, because I think this is good for SOCIETY.

I do 75% like the kind of research that shows up in in in these rankings, but I ALSO do 25% like that, and I think I think that that's good. And and the university also again the university also encourages these third mission activities. So it's NOT that the university doesn't want that.

Researcher

Sorry, what kind of?

[P15]

Third Mission, THIRD mission. So there's RESEARCH, there's TEACHING, and then there's the THIRD mission.

Researcher

Which is like knowledge exchange or something like that.

[P15]

We call it third mission like GETTING research into society, right? So this is, I mean, this is I have to be honest, this is APPRECIATED, although our [role in governance body] is telling us [name] cool publications are much MORE appreciated ((smiling)).

Researcher

((laughing)) Anyway, thank you so much for your time. Is there anything I didn't give you a chance to talk about in relation to this topic that you want to mention or?

[P15] No, no, I think that's fine. -

Researcher

OK. Thanks so much for your time again. It's been great talking to you. Thank you.

[P15]

Thank you, bye.

Researcher

Bye.